



Tilly The White-Liver Woman

From the author's foreword

When evening comes and day's hard tasks are
done, And mind is free,
Take up this book and let it be From me to thee.
And, reading it, return to days when youth Made all
things bright:
The sun in the day and the moon at night,
The laughter and love spontaneous and true
From parents and friends, And a few others too.
Memories to treasure of some long gone To homes
in the skies.
Think of the someone who herein tries

To bring you laughter or tears to your eyes.
But, if ire there be, forgive him, will you? And
remember, too,
'Twas love that was writing so this book would tell
Tales of devotion—affection as well.
And, if a tear should fall,
may it be for grace's sake And not for evil done.
For, as I grow old with love, I grow not old at all.
But, like the setting of the sun, I'm just a day's task
done.
Whoever goes with love, in very truth, forevermore
lives on.

Excerpt . . .

From the first story . . .

There she lay, at the prime of life, prostrate in a velvet-lined coffin, eyes closed, a Madonna-like smile on her face, both hands clasped as if in prayer, her legs outstretched like Siamese twins. Her mourners stop by, some to touch her face as if to inherit the beauty they see; some in sorrow, some in envy, some with dry tears, some to mutter something such as, "Tilly, Tilly, at last day is togedder." Some, remembering that Tilly had seen two husbands and about four "keepers" go to sleep, to ask, "Which man?" And in reply, "A not talking 'bout no man. A talking 'bout dem two legs." During her last years Tilly had lived in a large three-bedroom, three-bathroom house set on a hill at the corner on the Spanish Town/Kingston road. Being always well-kept and fronted by a flower garden, it put the nearby houses to shame, and, as should be expected, the neighbors disliked her and bandied around gossip which painted her in various shades of red and black. Despite the envy of the

women, Tilly was popular with the men. So popular, indeed that if Spanish Town had needed a female mayor, she would have been the one. Being unable to make her mayor, they named the nearby junction "Tilly's Korner," taking the cue from Kingston's "Mathilda's Corner" which the Brits, decades before, had rewarded a certain popular woman with. Tilly was blessed in many ways. In addition to her winsome ways, God (perhaps the devil) had bestowed upon her physical features that made her the dream of men and the envy of women. Her color was of the right shade--black coffee with a few drops of milk; the texture of her skin like the petals of a newly-opened hibiscus flower. Coming at you, she looked like a million; going away, like a good fortune you've missed. On your mind was left a lot of fussy longing. Better look quickly or not at all. I repeat: Going or coming she looked like a million. But it was the view from behind on which everyone's eyes got stuck, because there they saw

what looked like a pair of inflated air bags which alternately rose and fell as she walked. Several men had got into big trouble by failing to resist the temptation to squeeze, or even pat. It seemed that God's purpose was to provide her with soft seating. However, Tilly was not proud of her behind. As a matter of fact, she disliked it, especially as it distracted from her lady-like attractions. Thus, back-side-capped as she thought she was, she cultivated a gait that induced her behind to behave, and she blamed her mother who she said had induced the over-size by always pounding her backside with a wooden paddle when she was child. Amazing as it may seem, Tilly wasn't a show-off. She carried herself with poise and dignity, never attempting to accentuate her blessings through word or movement. She let her blessings do their part. So respectable she was that no one ever addressed her in any other way but "Miss Tilly." Tilly was not born in the Spanish Town area. When she arrived she

was about twenty, or so. She was brought to Spanish Town by an old Englishman, who, about a year earlier, had come and bought a house and ten acres of land. He was well over sixty, and retired—from what? No one knew. Being alone and a bit infirm, he had brought Tilly to look after him. She must have done a bang-up job looking after him because in a short time he was moving around with springs in his steps. He said it was the fresh Spanish Town air that did it. No one believed him because he had come from Montego Bay where the ocean air was fresher than fresh; whereas, the air in Spanish Town smelt like sugarcane fields. Be as it may have been, he loved Tilly more than life. He doted on her; every Sunday went to Mass with her though he was Anglican but she Catholic. But Tilly was not designed for such respectability. She was a free spirit, longing to see the world and knowing—really knowing—other people. Surely, not to be stuck to an old, “incapable” man, white man, notwithstanding. But the only outlet for her desires was her dreams. However, while a man's dreams could give him satisfaction of a sort, a woman's bring only intensified longing. This happened to Tilly. For relief she turned to her parish priest. In the confessional she begged for God's forgiveness and assistance, which the priest promised, assuring her that her prayers would be answered. Answered they truly were. Within a few weeks she was in child, and a few weeks later a bouncing baby boy was born. Not only bouncing he was, but every bit a spitting image of the priest. He had not given Tilly God's blessings only, but had aided God by adding a few of his own. Tilly looked upon it as a mixed blessing, as, indeed, it was. The old Englishman objected to giving the child his name, then relented. But his disappointment in Tilly was more than he could bear. He passed away, supposedly from a heart attack, leaving Tilly with everything he owned. Tilly, not wanting to be tied down to a child, especially one that looked like the priest, with the help of the priest, had the child adopted by a couple in

Puerto Rico. So Tilly found herself alone in a big house on a large piece of land, and glowing like a rising sun. Naturally, men came calling, but she cold-shouldered them all, especially the true, black Jamaicans who she said “wanted only one thing.” Furthermore, she didn't go for the saying that black is beautiful or better, and she pointed to proof: There were no beautiful, black flowers, only beautiful white, red or yellow ones, and these had honey. This choosiness caused Tilly to live alone for several months because most of the men that came calling were policemen, cane-cutters or Rastas. The parish priest was still trying to block his parishioners' way to purgatory but Tilly's discretion told her to confess to God directly. So she hung on her walls pictures of Jesus Christ with a bleeding heart, and, here and there, she placed dim-burning lamps. She even told her rejected suitors that her only love was for Jesus, and that only Jesus loved her. However, as much as Jesus may have loved her He wasn't putting bread on her table, nor was He helping her with the house and land. Instead, He seemed to be doing a good job taking care of the bushes which were crowding out the house. The Englishman had left her a nice piece of land and a big house, but little cash. Without cash, land and house became a burden. She considered selling a piece of the land but that might lead to her selling all of it and being ejected from her house. Looking into her mirror she realized that she did have something she could sell, and that if she was ever going into that business she'd have to do so now. At past the age of thirty she'd be “old furniture.” No one would want to sit on an old chair. Then came Mr. Arnold. He was half-white, half something else which didn't matter to Tilly. He said that he was single, a war veteran—his limp the result of battle wounds—and that he wanted a quiet, tropical place to retire. He was only about fifty-four. He didn't fully qualify for permanent residence with Tilly but he was an American, which would give her stature in the district. So she took him in. Money was not her

problem then. The American seemed to have a lot of it. Tilly didn't pry into his financial affairs. For a short time all went well. Tilly emerged into public view once again, sometimes on the arm of the American, the local women blue-green with envy. But things changed. . . . The man lost interest in Tilly and turned his attention to black men, the worst sort—Rastas. Tilly gave him hell for that, threatening to throw him out of the house. His explanation was that he had once been a social worker, so he wanted to continue his social work among disadvantaged Jamaicans. Believable enough for Tilly, so she let him be, even getting to like him. However, neither daytime or nighttime with him was enjoyable, so she banished him to a separate bedroom. Another thing that Tilly didn't like about the American was his habit of going about with a revolver under his shirt. He said it was a habit he had got as a soldier—without it he felt naked. Tilly feared that the revolver would get him into trouble sooner or later, especially as it was against the law to own a gun without a license. As she had feared, trouble came. Late one night a shot rang out. Tilly awoke and ran into Arnold's room, but he wasn't in, nor anywhere else in the house. After a few minutes he came in and told Tilly there wasn't anything to worry about. He had only scared away a thief who was trying to break in. So far, so good. But next morning two policemen arrived, handcuffed the American and took him and his revolver to the station. The thief he told Tilly he had chased away was, in reality, a Rasta friend of his. He had shot him while he was half-way in, half-way out her bathroom window. Fortunately, the bullet had lodged in the intruder's hind-quarters, causing him little injury other than another hole there. Arnold wondered why his friend was entering through Tilly's window, why she had left her window open when she knew it was dangerous to do so, and why she didn't seem upset at what had happened. However, he kept his suspicions to himself. The police charged him with . . .

TILLY THE WHITE-LIVER WOMAN

by Isaac Chin

\$19.95